

Looking for Love Online

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Introduction	4
Online dating, just a fad or a new way of life?	4
Checking out what's available	4
Free services	5
Monthly, yearly and lifetime fees	5
Before you create your profile	6
Protecting your privacy	6
What are you looking for?.....	6
Creating your profile	7
Your nickname / headline	7
About you	7
Describing the physical you	8
Displaying a photo.....	8
Dodgy photos	9
Describing your perfect match.....	9
Making contact	10
Taking the next step	10
Making your escape	11
Safety tips	12
Safer Sex	13
STDs	13
Top 10 things you never knew you needed to know about relationships	14
Appendix 1 – Dating acronyms.....	16
Appendix 2 – Emoticons	17
Appendix 3 – Chat lingo	18
Appendix 4 – Profile worksheets	20
Your interests	20
Your qualities.....	21
Ideal partner description	23
Nickname and headline	24
Statistics.....	25
My online dating sites	26
About the author.....	27

Introduction

Online dating, just a fad or a new way of life?

With the fast-paced, high-pressure lifestyle many of us lead today we no longer have the luxury of time to seek out new friends and develop relationships gradually. The internet offers the opportunity to check out, and chat to, an endless stream of people easily and almost instantaneously.

Originally seen as a medium only for the 'desperate and dateless' online dating has finally come of age and is now commonly used by people all over the world to find potential life partners, friends companions and lovers.

This guide will lead you through the process and give you a wealth of hints and tips to make your online dating experience as easy, safe and effective as possible. At the end of the book you will find worksheets that will help you explore your qualities and strengths, define what you are seeking in a partner, and to help you create your 'profile' or online personals ad.

Checking out what's available

First things first, check out the currently available dating websites, compare their pricing schedules, levels of service and appearance of reliability. Anyone can purchase a template with a dating site script and host a website, this does not mean they can provide a reliable service or that they have your best interests at heart. Ask your friends to recommend websites they have used and have found success with.

As well as regular online dating sites there are also sites for specific groups, for example:

- age specific singles sites
- race and religion based sites such as Jewish and Christian singles
- sites for people sharing the same medical condition, like herpes singles
- lifestyle based groups like Gothic singles
- lesbian and homosexual dating sites
- motorcycle enthusiast dating sites
- disabled dating sites

You name it, if you are interested in it you can probably find a specialist dating site for others who share your interest.

Free services

Most online dating services offer a 'free' option. Sometimes this is a full service, but usually it means that you have limited access and limited options. This can mean that you cannot make direct contact with other members, but you can send them an indication that you have seen their profile and are interested. If the other person has also chosen the limited option you are not going to get very far this way. Some people try to creatively get around the limitations by sending coded messages, but this system only works if the other person can work out your code!

If you are serious about finding a new partner, do your research, find the website that will best suit your needs at a price you are comfortable with and sign up for the real deal.

Monthly, yearly and lifetime fees

The majority of dating websites offer a variety of fee options so you can choose to try them out for just a month, make a saving by paying for a specific number of months or purchase a yearly or lifetime package. Fees can vary from a low \$9.95 per month to hundreds, and sometimes even thousands of dollars.

Make sure you read the fine print – the Terms of Service or Service Agreement. If you are not certain of what you get for your money, don't hesitate to email them and ask to have it clarified before handing over your money.

It's up to you to decide if what they offer is value for money and you are comfortable with paying that amount. What you must understand though, is that there can be no guarantee that you will find Mr / Ms Right, no matter how much you pay or how many sites you join.